

The Lords Supper

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Date: 01 January 2000

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[0 : 00] Well I want first of all to thank you for coming out on such an unpleasant evening and also to apologise for the delay in my arrival. No one trusts me that I think but myself but I trust a much more in the future I assure you on this British will very much less.

Well our theme has been too old yesterday the Holy Supper or the Royal Supper and I want first of all to make some general points. The first one I want to make is that in the New Testament there is a remarkable lack of attention and lack of reference to this ordinance.

There are some churches that present the very centre of their life and liturgy, those of more christian inclination and they convey the impression that this sacrament really is almost the be-all and the end-all of Christianity.

It is in my view a very full answer to that that in the New Testament it's referred to so very very infrequently. We have the accounts in the Gospels of its institution in Matthew, Mark and Luke.

We have some references in Acts in the Breaking of Bread and of course also in 1 Corinthians there are references from the pen of the Apostle Paul. And these really exhaust references to this ordinance in the New Testament.

[1 : 27] There are some allusions which some detect in other passages, maybe in John's Gospel, but as I say these are only allusions.

This reminds me that the supper is not to be marginalised. It certainly is not what lies at the heart of Christian life and Christian discipleship.

It has its own importance. But the word of God preached is far more important as far as the Bible goes than is any particular sacrament.

I intend nor does honour at all to the Lord's Supper but I do want to assert this corrective to a very prevalent supplemental point of view.

Secondly, it is very interesting how in giving us a history of the Lord's Supper in 1st chapter 11, the Apostle Paul is so anxious to indicate the precise dating of this institution.

[2 : 31] He tells us that it happened on the night in which the Lord was betrayed. Verse 23 of 1 Corinthians chapter 11.

Now I mention this not for any academic purpose because it seems to me to be a very great tribute to the Lord's pastoral concern. That on this night when so many other claims pressed upon his attention, this night when he had his own, shall I say, very pressing personal problems, that then he was so concerned for his church that for their benefit he set up what the Anglican Articles call this comforting, this comfortable ordinance.

Most of us, if we had faced what he faced on the following day, would have been very much immersed in our own problems and our own imminent difficulties.

But his heart was so much on the needs of his people that for their sake he calmly attends this Passover meal and calmly and with great dignity, and with great dignity, institutes this ordinance for the benefit of his own church.

And the third point that I want to make is that the Apostle claims in this chapter that his teaching on this subject has come directly from the Lord himself.

[4 : 04] Now there is a slight difficulty in this subject to the sequence of historical events here. I know that in the Synoptic Gospels, Matthew, Mark and Luke, there are references to this Lord's Supper.

But it is virtually certain that these Gospels are all later than 1 Corinthians. And we have in this Epistle the earliest of our accounts in canonical form of the setting up of this particular sacrament.

And the Apostle tells us that in fact he received this from the Lord. And there is a very interesting form of words used by the Apostle in this 23rd verse.

I received what I also passed on to you. There is a kind of circularity which is very instructive for our whole Christian lives.

that here the human being stands in the middle of a process of receiving and a process of transmission. The Apostle received and the Apostle passed on.

[5 : 16] And that really is symbolic of the whole nature of Christian life and witness. It is a receiving of testimony. We all owe so much to others.

But it is also a transmission or a passing on of testimony. It comes to us. It does not stop with us. We pass on for to receive.

A really important thing here is that the Apostle indicates that what he received, he received from the Lord himself. Now the natural meaning of those words is that the Apostle's teaching on this subject had come to him by direct revelation from the risen Lord.

He was a minister of peasant with the eleven disciples at the Lord's table originally. But his teaching on this subject, he says, was not derived from any other Apostle.

It was derived from the Lord himself. It goes back as far as Paul is concerned to a Dominican revelation, a word given to him by the risen Saviour.

[6 : 23] Well, having covered these points, I want to face two or three questions. Of which the first is, what is the nature of the Lord's Supper? What I want to do here is to look at some of the words which have been used in Christian history and in the New Testament to describe this particular ordinance.

There are several words which have been used to denote this sacrament to us. The first of those is the word sacrament itself. It is often referred to, especially in some circles of the Western Highlands, it's referred to as the sacrament.

And people spoke of going to sacrament or going to the sacrament. Now the word sacrament is an interesting one. I'm sure you have all heard this word used in exposition of the Lord's Supper at communion time.

And you've been told that it comes from an Latin word sacramentum, which meant the oath taken by a Roman soldier. And it was therefore suggested that the Lord's Supper was in the same way, the taking of an oath to Christ and the entering into an obligation of loyalty to him at a very personal level.

Now that of course is not untrue, but the word sacramentum itself is a Latin word, not a biblical word. And therefore it cannot be used for theological purposes because it is not something sanctioned by revelation itself.

[8 : 01] There is also a further difficulty that the word sacramentum has really been somewhat corrupted by its origin.

If you let me explain what I mean for a moment. It was used in the Latin Vulgate to translate the word mystery in the New Testament.

For example, as a girl to marriage in Ephesians 5, the Apostle Paul says, this is a great mystery, a great Mystery, I speak of Christ and the Church.

And the Latin Vulgate trusted the mystery at that point, or was stated at that point by the word sacramentum. This is a great sacramentum. Now one difficulty with that of course is that in subsequent Catholic thought, marriage came to be seen as a sacrament.

But the more serious difficulty with it is that the word sacrament came to be identified with the word mystery. And my association began to speak of the mystery of the Lord's Supper.

[9 : 08] And it was a short distance from that to actually mystifying the Lord's Supper, which I'm afraid has often happened in Christian history.

Even our most ever Scottish theologians such as Robert Bruce of Edinburgh, who wrote several sermons on the Lord's Supper, which are still of great importance to theologians, he entitled that work, The Mystery of the Lord's Supper.

Now, I think it's very important to shake off this whole notion of mystery and of mystification. There were in New Testament times, or shortly afterwards, what were called mystic religions.

They were in some ways like Masonic lunches. They had mysterious initiation rites. And it would be important for us to distance ourselves as far as we can from that kind of view of Christianity.

So the word sacrament has very limited value in helping us understand the Lord's Supper. It is limited value because it is a Latin word, and because it translates a Greek word in the Bible, and yet the word mystery, which has led us to turn the sacrament often into a mystery.

[10 : 33] And the people have had a very, very difficult truth. The Bible is teaching on it at face value. Secondly, the Lord's Supper is a Eucharist. It is often referred to as the Eucharist.

Now, this term has been more common and prevalent in Episcopal and Catholic circles than it has been in Reformed circles. But it should be remembered over and over against that, that the term itself is utterly biblical.

It comes again from verse 24 or 23. The Lord took bread when he had given thanks, Eucharist says, when he had given thanks.

And the word Eucharist simply means giving thanks. And the Lord's Supper is called that because, first of all, it always begins with a prayer of thanksgiving.

But also because it comes to be the great point of thanksgiving in the life of every Christian. The thanksgiving is thanksgiving over the bread, the bread which symbolizes the broken body of the Lord Jesus.

[11 : 49] And it is over the bread that the thanks are given. That means that the active Eucharist of thanksgiving focuses specifically on the gift to us of God's own Son.

And at this point we are saying thank you, Lord, for Jesus. Thank you for the broken body, for the incarnation, and for the death of Christ on the cross of Calvary. I think it is important to widen the scope of that into the manner that says that really each occasion of the Lord's Supper being administered should be a specific point of thanksgiving in the Christian life.

Not only for the unique gift of Christ, but for all of God's many benefits. The bread symbolizing the daily bread given to us and symbolizing within that all those ways in which God supplies our needs according to his own riches and glory by Christ Jesus.

So the Lord's Supper is a place of thanksgiving. And this is a very important part of the Bible's own understanding of this particular sacrament.

So it is sacrament and it is also Eucharist. We see thirdly that the Lord's Supper is a proclamation.

[13 : 07] We see that from verse 26. You proclaim the Lord's death till he comes. Now in some ways this of course is a proclamation that takes place through the visible signs, the elements that are used, the bread and the wine, the sacramental actions and the sacramental words.

And through all of these there is a proclamation. The bread for example is broken. Now in Presbyterian liturgy if it is administered carefully, there has been historically a great emphasis on the breaking of bread as a specific point in the act of worship itself because the breaking is deemed to be important.

Now I personally always try to observe that particular emphasis if one is composed enough, which one isn't always at the Lord's table. We try to pause and quite deliberately break the bread because that's part of our own story tradition.

I have a difficulty that I'm not entirely convinced as to its propriety because the breaking of bread, I'm fairly certain, in Jewish practice was a common act of thanksgiving.

It was in fact the Jewish grace. The head of the household said the grace by breaking bread or accompanied by breaking bread. So the breaking of bread is probably historically part of the act of the Eucharist rather than having in itself any symbolic sacrificial significance indicating the breaking of the body of Jesus.

[15 : 00] But there is no doubt that taking the overall symbolism the focus does fall very much on the sacrifice of Christ. This is the body which is for you, which is given for you, which is broken for you.

The blood shed, this is my blood in your covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins and so on. All that is pointing to the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus.

And the words, for example, that say, take, eat, this is my body. There again is the Lord saying to us, the body is broken.

It's there, the crucified Christ is there for you to come to. But you get no benefit unless you take, unless you appropriate, unless you eat. And the second is saying both that Christ has given himself for us and that we must take him and we must eat.

And God at the table in fact is there saying to us, take, eat. He said that to us very, very directly.

[16 : 04] And there are other things in the symbolism as well which are proclamatory. So, yes, there is proclamation therefore through the symbols, the bread, the wine, through the breaking, through the pouring of the wine, etc.

And the words would explain those actions. But it seems to me again that if one reflects on this, there is good reason to believe that what Paul really means is that at the Lord's Supper originally there was a narrative given of the passion, the suffering of Jesus Christ.

In other words, it wasn't simply, maybe not even primarily, that through the elements of the actions there was a symbolic proclamation of the death of Christ.

But that as they sat at the table, the story of the cross was narrated. Just from all the other collection in the first instance, from memory, later on through various written records.

And it is in fact a deeply suggestive thing. I sometimes myself often, sometimes wished, that as we sat at the table, we had someone read the Gospel story to us.

[17 : 19] So, Isaiah's account of the crucifixion in his 53rd chapter, the proclamation there of the sufferings of the Lord.

You'll find in some theologians that the expression of the view, that really there is too much talking at the Lord's table, and that we ought to receive it in silence.

And there is some plausibility in that, if you attach a lot of importance to the elements themselves. However, it is suggested here by Paul that in the early church, as they took the elements, there was a proclamation going on.

And if we go back again to the scene in the upper room on that Passover night, you recall that from John's Gospel, that the Lord was talking, and giving us those discourses.

We don't know exactly at what point in the upper room the Lord's Supper was administered, and some of the discourses, obviously, after they left the room.

[18 : 25] But it's very likely that a proportion of the discourse in John's Gospel was given while they sat at the original Lord's Supper. And I'm not convinced at all of the merit of receiving the sacrament in silence.

The early church, as they received the sacrament, had this proclamation of the Passion, and they also, on the first occasion, had the Lord himself talking to them at the table.

So the Lord's Supper is a sacrament, the Lord's Supper is a Eucharist, the Lord's Supper is a proclamation, the Lord's Supper is also commemoration. Do this, he says in verse 24, in remembrance of me.

It takes us back to the foundation events of our own redemption. It's a reminder to us that Jesus Christ, God's Son, came into this world of material, the bread, this three-dimensional world.

He was there on the night. There is the material element. There is also, of course, the time element. He came into space-time history. He was there.

[19 : 40] And we remember that on that night, He did these things, said these things. And the following day on the cross, He literally gave Himself for us. And the Lord's Supper therefore designed to perpetuate the memory of our Saviour.

The Lord's Supper is also a communion. I take this again from the previous chapter of 1 Corinthians. It is a communion in the body and the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now the word for communion here again requires in a way to be demystified. It is simply, it is a word that comes from the Greek word for common.

And it means having things in common. In other words, at the communion, the Christians shared the bread. They had communion in the bread.

And beyond that, they had communion in the body of Christ. They shared Christ. In other words, the bread was common to them, and the body of Christ was common to them, and the cup was common to them, and the blood of Christ was common to them.

[20 : 51] They were sharing these things. Now the best way to do that is to go back to Melancthon's principle that to know God is to know Him in His benefits.

And communion in the body of Christ means that together we share in the benefits which have been secured to us by Christ, and specifically by the breaking of His body, and by the shedding of His blood.

Now there is a very interesting liturgical point here, and liturgy is sometimes very important, and I regret often that we don't pay more attention to it, although I am the last person to talk about liturgy.

But in many traditions, as you recall, each individual believer receives the element, the bread, the wafer, from a clergyman, from a priest, or sometimes from an elder.

And sometimes in our own tradition as Presbyterians, there has been a very interesting, if I feel a ridiculous view, that only a minister, for example, can send a minister, that I could not receive the element strong even from an elder.

[22 : 07] Now there has, I think this requires much more thought than we commonly give to it. There is great merit here in ensuring a form of celebration, which provides that each believer receives it from his companion, and passes it on to his companion, to maintain again this circularity, this giving and this receiving.

If we take the view that only a minister can give the elements, or only an elder can give the elements, we are really encouraging a kind of priestcraft, or superstition and sacramentalism.

And my own view is that the involvement of what we may for the moment call the clergy, should be kept to the absolute minimum. It is enough if the elements are passed to a member of the body of Christ, by another member, and he passes it along the pew.

Now of course sometimes we have to start the circle with the preacher, who is presiding over the ordinance, because he is a preacher.

But it would be invidious in my view to arrange it so that the preacher gives the elements to each person, or that an elder gives it to each person, because that I think minimises the emphasis on sharing, on koinonia, on fellowship, that we have things in common.

[23 : 36] And I think that this circle is a great and useful reminder to us that we are part of a circle of giving and receiving. So what we have seen?

We have seen that the Lord's Supper is a sacrament, the Lord's Supper is also a Eucharist, it is a proclamation, the Lord's Supper is a commemoration, the Lord's Supper is a communion or fellowship.

The Lord's Supper again is a supper. It is a means of grace. And that in many ways is primary purpose. People came to the Lord's Supper to get fed.

Now it is unfortunate that we have again shifted the emphasis, I am sorry I am being so corrective, but in my view this is the area where Reformed thought has been most bound by the legacy of pre-Reformation thought.

And I am conscious that I am being corrective on so many points here. But what we have done you see is turn the Lord's Supper often into an ordeal.

[24 : 38] And we have given it enormous existential significance. I am very impressed sometimes at Highland communion services with the note of urgency that comes in on a Saturday morning where there is a deliberate attempt made to motivate people to come to the Lord's Table.

And it is very similar to an evangelistic urgency. As if some of it were parallel to this great step, parallel to coming to Christ.

And I have heard solemn warnings about letting the opportunity pass. And I have heard very sentimental stories about people refused admission and dying before the next communion season.

as if this were something of enormous spiritual significance. Now what I am saying is that you could not find in the New Testament a text for such a serve.

Because the New Testament church did not regard coming to the table as such an ordeal or such a decisive moment. It was the most natural thing in the world for these Christians to come to the Lord's Table.

[25 : 47] And I would hope that we might one day move towards that kind of biblical attitude towards this particular ordinance. They came to be fed. They came to get the benefits of Christ.

They came to be fed. They came to be fed. They came to be fed. They came to be fed because they hungered and thirsted after righteousness. If you ask me, what did they get at the Lord's Table? The best analysis of that that I know, is given to us indirectly in our own shorter catechism.

The response of the question, what benefits do in this life accompany or flow from from justification, adoption and sanctification? And the answer is assurance of God's love, peace of conscience, joy in the Holy Ghost, increase or growth in grace and perseverance therein to the end. Now that is a marvelous summary of what spread for us on the table at the Lord's Supper.

I don't know if I can suggest that we should come to the Lord's Supper not so much to have to have feelings that is to be suffused with a warm glow although I'm not at all opposed to feelings in an age of rampant moderatism when there's little enthusiasm in our religion. But many folk come to the table expecting a great wave of emotion when the elements come round and they don't get that.

But we're not there to get those great waves of emotion, we're there to get assurance of God's love, peace of conscience, joy in the Holy Ghost and spiritual growth. Now it is interesting of course that many of those things are in fact emotions and affections, assurance of God's love, peace of conscience, joy in the Holy Spirit and growth. That's where we come into supper. It's meant to nourish, as what Cary Gibson says, we come for our spiritual nourishment and growth in grace.

[27 : 47] Can I put it again in terms of another antithesis? We speak so often of people professing. Now that would make no sense you see in the New Testament context because in the New Testament context there were no spectators. There was simply the gathered church and the Lord said it was never seen as a profession. Of course in the New Testament church, profession was important but you confessed Christ in the world on Monday. You held fast your confession. Confession was in the world. That's where people know where you stood. The Lord's Supper had different purposes. The Lord's Supper was a spiritual oasis. It was a time of spiritual relaxation. It was a spiritual feast. You came to the Lord's table to get food for your soul to get assurance of God's love, peace of conscience, joy in the Holy Ghost and so on.

Put it this way you see, what is the qualification for coming to our supper? Hunger, appetite, that you want the things on the table. And if we ask, am I qualified for the Lord's table? I'm asking, well do I want what's provided in this feast? Do I want assurance of God's love? And so on and so forth. So the Lord's Supper is, as I said, a supper, it is a means of grace. I want to make just one last quote here and it's this. It's very elementary and yet in my view it's enormously important. The Lord's Supper is an ordinance.

Now in our Gaelic communities, that is the most frequently used word of course, the Horthy, the ordinances. And that was also prevalent in some eastern parts of Scotland at one time, the ordinance, the ordinances.

Now I just want to take from that one simple fact. Now clearly this is something that it is not at our discretion to come to or not to come to. It is a divine ordinance. I'm often amazed that people have such a view of the pitching of the word as something they must attend, and the Lord's day as something they must observe, because these are both ordinances. But the Lord's Supper is not seen in our circles often as an ordinance. There is much made, you see, of the sin of what is called unworthy communicating. But there is a very much more widely prevalent sin in our circles, the sin of not communicating. And that really is a glaring act of defiance on the part of a Christian.

The best motive for coming to the Lord's table is the motive of obedience. We come because Christ told us in this way to give thanks, to proclaim them, to commemorate them, to share them with others, to come to this place, this ordinance, this do in remembrance of me. We have no option.

[31 : 01] And where there is faith that will hear Christ's voice say, I would like to correct the whole balance. The problem is not that I want to make people feel guilty about coming to the table. I personally don't understand where that could be found in the New Testament. But I want to emphasize the other guilt, the guilt of not coming. And I'm asking you, how many free church people do you know if you feel guilty about not coming to the Lord's table? About not coming? About defying this ordinance, this do, this clear directive, this do in remembrance of me. Now thankfully things have changed a good deal in our lifetime with this respect, and there are fewer and fewer people who are through Christians who don't come to the Lord's table. But there is still this lingering suspicion that really it is wholesome that people should stay away and that people should be made to feel guilty about coming and regarded as some great climax, some crisis in their own lives. It really is the most natural thing in the world that a

Christian should come to the Lord's table. Well so much for the nature of this particular sacrament. The apostle then goes on to ask in this section here, where what follows, verse 27, And therefore, whoever eats the bread or thinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of sinning against the body and blood of the Lord. Now the apostle raises the question of unworthy participating in the Lord's Supper and indicates that if we do that, then we incur guilt. And that guilt is this, we have offended against the body and blood of the Lord. Not against some human ordinance, but against the body and blood of the Lord.

Now the whole argument here hinges on this. What is meant by in an unworthy manner? It is not a poor, trembling soul, feeling that he may be a hypocrite. That is not what Paul has in mind.

The context you see is defined for us in verse 21 downwards. The abuses at Corinth were horrific. I would go to the sacrament. I would go to the sacrament. I would go to the sacrament in detail. But the sacrament had become there a virtue of an orgy.

There was drunkenness, there was gluttony, and there was snobbery. And it was all happening around the Lord's table. Now it was that that Paul had in mind. It was that that it stressed. That level of abuse.

[33 : 50] That's it. If I want a theological criterion that can define for me the phrase in an unworthy manner, I simply ask that we remind ourselves again of the nature of the Lord's Supper.

To come in an unworthy manner is to come in a way that is not controlled by the nature of the Lord's Supper. That disregards what it is. That was Paul's basic complaint. This bread, this cup, is particular and specific.

It's not just any feast. It's not just a party. It's not an orgy. This bread, this cup, well what was it? It was a Eucharist. It was a proclamation. It was a commemoration. It was a supper. It was an ordinance.

You come, shall I say, in inverted commas, worthily. If in your coming you are controlled by these things. To be precise, I'm asking, Paul is asking, are we coming to give thanks to God for His Son?

Are we coming because we love proclaiming His Son? Are we coming to commemorate His Son? Are we coming to share His Son? Are we coming because we're hungry and thirsty? Are we coming because God commanded us in this ordinance?

[35 : 22] It's a question of motivation. It's a question of motivation. And that motivation must arise from what the Son there is. That's the point, you see. Take just one thing there for a minute. Thanksgiving, it's a Eucharist.

To come in an unworthy manner is to come in a way that has nothing to do with Eucharist. In a way that isn't in the least concerned to give thanks to God. That disregards Thanksgiving.

But if we come with thankfulness and come to give thanks. If we come to commemorate. If we come to share, to receive and to give. If we come to proclaim.

If we come because the memory of Christ is precious to us. If we come because God commands us to come. And we say, well I don't deserve to come, but God has leave that up to me. I command you to come.

Then we're coming in an appropriate manner. I don't very much like the word worthy here. An axiosa in an appropriate manner. An appropriate manner is one that is regulated by the nature of the sacrament itself.

[36 : 37] Well because it's so important, Paul says there's something you must do. A man ought to examine himself before he eats. And we must do it every time. Not just the first time, but every time.

Because the danger exists of our coming in an appropriate way. We must examine ourselves every time that we come. And as we do that, I say again, we ask ourselves, am I coming to the table in a way that's controlled by the nature of the table itself?

Am I coming for the right reasons, with the right motives? And how eloquent you see and precise this Pastor Paul is. Let a man examine himself. Not other people.

It's not a place for censoriousness. But let a man examine himself every time he comes. Lest, he says, we eat and drink judgment. We bring judgment on ourselves.

Lest, he says, we eat and drink. Now I'm obviously going through this rapidly at this point because I don't want to delay you unduly. But unfortunately in the authorized version the word that we have here is the word damnation.

[37 : 58] Now that's not because the authorized men, the AV men, were wrong. It's because the word damnation has so changed its meaning since 1611. The shorter catechism written shortly afterwards, in about 1645, 244, has simply the word judgment. And that is the correct translation of this particular passage.

There are interesting occasions, incidentally, when the catechism is more accurate as a translation than the authorized version. But I'll leave that aside. There is no place in the Bible for the notion that to come to the Lord's table unworthily or inappropriately is the sin or is the unpardonable sin.

It will indeed bring judgment, but not final judgment. If it did, you see, who could stand? None of us could stand. So Paul is saying, yes, it is a solemn thing to come to this table inappropriately, in a way not regulated by what the Lord's Supper is. So therefore, everybody examines themselves.

And we do so consciously that if we come inappropriately, then we expose ourselves to God's just cement.

Now, it will help us to understand the whole thrust of the thought here, if we remember one simple fact, that Paul is writing to Christians. The idea of unbelievers at the table is simply not on his horizon.

[39 : 34] It is not for a moment through that if we're converted, we're all right. We're not going to interfere. That's not Paul's teaching. It's the converted people Paul is interested in. He's not saying to them, examine yourselves to see if you're converted. That is an appropriate question in some contexts.

But here is a word to the saints in Corinth. They've been justified, they've been sanctified, they are saints. And he wants them to examine themselves, not to see if they are saints, but to see if they have a correct understanding and discernment of the Lord's Supper. In other words, as far as Paul is concerned here, only Christians can come to the Lord's table inappropriately. Now, my qualification of course, that is as far as Paul is concerned here. Of course, it's inappropriate for non-Christians to come.

But that's not Paul's universal discourse. What he's interested in is Christians who forget what the Lord's Supper is all about. I'm not sure, you see, that is a thing we can regal out of.

Those who come to the Lord's table, for example, believing that it is a Mass in which Christ is physically present, they have our own view of the Supper. Those who came and were coming to a party at the Lord's table, for example, for the Lord's table, for the Lord's table, for the Lord's table, for the Lord's table.

But what about those who come thinking of some great ordeal, some test, some act of herosity that they perform? Is that also not inappropriate? Here is a party, a spiritual feast prepared by us for our Heavenly Father, and we're coming with fear and trembling. We're going to examine ourselves. It's about Christians examining themselves.

[41 : 31] Are they coming to the Lord's table inappropriately? And if they don't, then these Christians will be judged. Now, it doesn't mean that they will go to hell or they'll be damned because they're Christians.

But if we come to the Lord's table, in other words, if we are wrong in our attitude to and in practice with regard to the Lord's Supper, then God will judge us. And you say, it's okay, I don't go to the Lord's Supper, I'm safe enough.

But you see, that itself may be wrong. You are wrong in your attitude to the Lord's Supper if as a Christian you don't come. You know what a sermon is wrong. And that exposes you to this judgment, to this damnation, to this chastening.

You've got to say that. But those who guiltily and wrongly upset themselves on the Lord's Supper are as much in risk of God's judgment as those who come with a false understanding and with false practices and false attitudes.

We must all examine ourselves as to our own attitude and our own motives for God or Jesus. Now people say of course that the Sacrament is so solemn because there is no comparable teaching with regard to the preaching of the Word. Now I've heard this so often I've had to think it through and I can well recall when it was a mandatory part of every church coming in service that the preacher should say we now come to the most solemn part of the service. One or two men began to protest and it was not I it happened just before my time they began to protest that this was not the case that this was not the most solemn part of the service that the preaching of the word was equally solemn. It was as when a second comes to Macaulay and back began to make this point very much certainly in Western and Gaelic circles and quite rightly so because there is a reference to the preaching of the word which is equally solemn. How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation which began to be spoken. That is equally solemn. It is as solemn to sit unresponsively and responding to the word of God whether we are converted or unconverted and I come back into that context you see how shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation.

[44 : 20] way Christians that's the universal discourse the whole context is about Christians and their attitudes and Christians neglecting their own salvation not putting their hearts into their salvation how will they escape if they're neglected they will experience condign judgment not damnation in the sense of going to hell but to sit negligently under the world is as much to incur guilt as to come to the Lord's table without discernment now there is a question which I just want to ventilate because it has been so important in discussion of this subject in history the question of the presence of Christ in the supper it's sometimes called the sacramental presence it is in fact also often referred to as the real presence the real presence now the real presence is a useful place to access the difficulty because the real presence is a highly specific concept it is not real in our sense of genuine it's not the genuine presence it is real in the very technical sense that it is the presence of the thing itself the word real from the Latin word *res*

I'm sorry sounding so ridiculously learned and I would like to assure you that that was a very false impression I think much more than I read but the reality here is the thing you see and the thing is the body of Christ and the precise meaning of the phrase the real presence is the presence of the thing namely the body of Jesus now of course you deserve many branches of the church that of the Lord's Supper this is exactly what happens and this is the mystery this is the sacramentum the mystery the thing is present this is an idea with which I find it exceedingly difficult to be patient because it is utterly incomprehensible to me how we ever got from the New Testament to that but somehow we got to it and even we ourselves haven't quite shaken the idea off now if I can just give you a very brief resume of the way this has gone in Christian history you all know the position of Roman Catholicism this notion of what is called transubstantiation and this teaches that the bread and the wine are literally changed into the thing the bread becomes the body of Jesus the wine becomes the blood of Jesus and Roman Catholicism in the Council of Trent asserts that doctrine with the utmost vehemence and with total lack of ambiguity it went to the crassest lengths and said here this bread is now the body soul and divinity of Christ it said every crumb of the bread is the body soul and divinity every drop of the wine is the body soul and divinity that's why the laity could not drink the wine because they might spill a drop of it they might spill the body soul and divinity of Christ there was no limit to this in the sacrament

Christ was masticated Christ was true the body the thing the thing was there in the most literal sense of the the that's not conditioned by certain philosophical assumptions that is fairly absurd but that is the way it is and this is why the reformers reacted so vigorously to Roman Catholic teaching and almost maintained this debate unabated although it must be said on one level that very very few Roman Catholic lay people know what the church teaches on the subject and also that modern theologians the R.C.

church are very anxious trying to regain out of this commitment made for them by the Council of Threat but the church's official position is utterly unambiguous that the bread and the wine literally are the thing they are the body blood soul and divinity of Jesus then there is the Lutheran position which is defined as consubstantiation and it is at least equally mysterious and unintelligible it is to the effect you see that the bread remains bread whereas in Catholicism bread is changed but in Lutheranism the bread remains bread and alongside of that consubstantiation there is the body of Christ in with and under the bread in other words in Catholicism when you eat the bread you eat one thing the body of Christ in Lutheranism you eat two things the bread and the body they're both consubstantiation side by side in with and under

I didn't go into that then there is the position of John Calvin a reasonable theologian and also man of moderation seeking the mean between two extremes and Calvin is very much with regard to the Lord's Supper but Calvin in my judgment never managed to shake off the legacy of Rome and Luther on this particular issue I would not dare say such a thing in my own authority to an audience of this kind but those of you who read theology may possess a copy of William Cunningham's work *The Reformers and Theology of the Reformation* and in that book that is a superb book there is an essay on Swingley and the doctrine of the sacraments and that is the single best treatment in the English language of the Lord's Supper and in that essay Cunningham is very critical of Calvin's position with regard to the presence of Christ in the sacrament and dismisses it as unintelligible as the view of Luther himself now Calvin you see was very very reluctant he had a tremendous regard for Luther he was also mentally conditioned by medievalism in this whole area and he simply could not shake off the idea that somehow the thing was present in the sacrament the real presence the thing being the body of Christ himself couldn't shake it off and Calvin advocated the view that just as the sun's rays come from the sun to earth so something emanated from the body of Christ in heaven down to the Lord's table and if you asked well how is it possible for that how can influences emanate from the body in heaven to earth he said simply the Holy Spirit can do anything it was really just calling in God to solve an insoluble problem he had to have the body and the body was present in some indefinable way it was there there was communion with the body and that's why even the fourth the old church like Robert Bruce as I said continually speak of the mystery of the Lord it was a real mystery and nothing more mysterious than having bread put into the body of the Son of God or the bread accompanied by the body of God's Son or influences from the body from heaven to earth that is very very mysterious but I don't very much of it speak like him now there was a fourth man's

[52 : 53] Wingly and he's a notorious man because everybody has an idea that there is a thing called Swinglianism and it's a heresy because it means that the sacraments are but naked and bare signs now it isn't at all certain that Swingly taught that the sacraments are but naked and bare signs and it isn't at all clear what is meant when we deny that they're only naked and bare signs because to some people at least they are only naked and bare signs Swingly had a much more biblical view in my judgment and he argued two things first that the body is not present the physical resurrection body of Christ is not present now you all learned this element of Swingly's teaching in your youth in your shorter catechism the body of Christ is present not after a corporal and carnal manner

Christ not present after a corporal carnal manner the body is not there the flesh the caro of Christ is not there that is the most elementary single negative with regard to the Lord's Supper there is no sense in which the flesh the body of Christ is at the Lord's table Swingly said the body is at the right hand of the majesty on high that's where it is and the body is not at the Lord's table but equally Swingly said Christ is at the Lord's table his body is not but he is he is there a present to faith he is there in the hearts of his people he is there by his Holy Spirit in other words this is a genuine presence a personal presence not the real presence the sense of the thing the body being present but real in the sense that Christ is really present he is present as he is present wherever two or three gather in his name he is present as he is present in the prayer meeting he is present as he is present in the preaching of the word he is present as he was present to the saints of the Old Testament there is no peculiar sacramental presence you cannot teach you see we have tonight the prayer meeting presence and tomorrow we have the preaching presence and next month we have the sacramental presence as of some though these were gradations on some kind of scale the personal Christ is present wherever his people gather wherever his word is preached wherever his name is in vital prayer he is present there present in our hearts present with his grace with his help in time of need present in his benefits now

I run a very serious danger as I just close this the danger that maybe I've taken all the mystique out of it or too much of the mystique out of it I would hate to make it all too logical I am left with my own mystery the mystery of the presence the personal spiritual presence to faith of the Lord Jesus Christ but what I'm imposing is a specific mystery peculiar to the sacrament of the Lord's Supper I'm saying the mystery is the same here as it is in the prayer meeting in the preaching in Christian fellowship the same mystery the same Christ the same benefits well I hope that in some way that may help you to understand the Lord's Supper and above all to engage in this practice of self-examination I would love to return to New Testament practice in two levels first of all the much more frequent administration of this ordinance in the New Testament was obviously administered in the early days not only once a week on the Lord's Day but in the earliest days virtually every day it was so frequent and we did it become very much more infrequent not on principle but because of circumstances and then circumstances of course we were given the stilts of principle but we simply didn't have enough men in the 1560s to have a sacrum and suffer as John Knox wanted and that said unfortunate precedence so we should have it in my judgment very much more frequent that's up to your own local curcution the difficulty of course is you'd have it much more often you must obviously have have it very much less elaborately and that causes problems but the difficulties there are emotional not theological it just doesn't feel right but there is no biblical demand that we should have all those services although quite frankly

I think we should have high days in the church's calendar and so on because a lot of people need feasts as well as ordinary days but the Lord's Supper does not require in and of itself any great number of accompanying services any before or after and I'd also love to experiment with the Lord's Supper in a biblical setting if I understand it correctly as the Lord started this Passover meal the meal began with the Eucharist the breaking of bread the thanksgiving that was the very first thing and the meal ended with a cup the cup of blessing at the end of the meal the grace after the meal and in between there was the discussion there was the discussion and I have this ambition this desire that sometime before I die I would have the Lord's Supper administered in that kind of framework the service beginning with the breaking of the bread and then the preaching and the singing and then at the end the cup after the meal and I think that that would approximate much more closely to the biblical pattern than what we currently do and maybe your Lord's Day morning services may someday approximate to that model

I shall not see it I'm sure the very fact that I advocated is enough to make sure that it will never happen but I just want to sow the seed in your minds thank you nice to have a lecture with a surprise ending isn't it thanks again very much indeed Professor MacLeod I think we could have a couple of questions if there were questions that you really wanted to ask I'm not putting it that way to hinder you from asking them are there things that have come up that you really would like to follow on yes what is meant by not discerning the Lord's body I have never seen a totally convincing answer to that question I think part of the answer is that it means not distinguish it from other kinds of sacraments other kinds of suppers discern is to make a difference between to distinguish this supper from other suppers my own judgment broadly is that to discern is to correctly understand what the sacrament is all about that it is about the body of Christ and we come to give thanks for it to commemorate it to proclaim it to share it and to feast upon it in other words the meal is distinguished by its relation to the body of Christ that this sets it apart from all other meals in Corinth they were profaning the Lord's Sabbath as a common meal like any other meal and Paul says you must put a difference this bread this cup and this is distinguished he says by its relation to the body of Jesus which you give thanks for and so on another one in the early days in the early days who do you think from scripture might quite well have been the chairman at the meeting when they came together to eat the supper

[62 : 07] I need to see who's here before I answer that question no it just happens from that my thought of describing me in directions that I would some as rather not be going in there is a famous statement in the apostolic fathers that in the early days all preached and all baptized and that would indicate to me that the level of ecclesiastical polity that was prevalent then was fairly basic and I would certainly not think that there was any felt need for a clergyman to decide in that particular respect the furthest I can go is that the sacrament lives under the preaching and that the preacher would presumably have presided but there is no record whatever on it wrong either in the New Testament or in the second century apostolic fathers there is no record whatever that that kind of problem troubled the early church they were far more

I think not disorganized but far more spontaneous than that on the other hand I think we would have to bear in mind that it would be impossible to go back to the primitive model in every instance and that the important part establishes that all things be done decently and in order and many questions of church order are not built on theological foundations they're built on considerations of order and decency and everybody must know who's to preside and have confidence in the man who does preside and those would be fairly essential principles but it would cause me personally no trouble whatever if at that point I left the pulpit and an elder presided with prayer or whatever that has happened often enough in many contexts and it wouldn't frankly bother me a great deal if somebody not an elder were delegated to perform that particular task it doesn't frankly seem to me that these canon law questions are at all relevant or germane to the theological issues but that's what

I'm terrified of you see that I have come against my own emotions to the judgment that the New Testament is profoundly anti-clerical and that we have to try to maintain that perspective as far as we can and whereas I believe with all my heart in the primacy of preaching I really do not like to see the sacraments of the baptism of the Lord's Supper mystified or turned into magical rites that only witch doctors can administer so as I said I'm very happy it is good order if the minister presides it may be good order again if the elder presides or if some lay person presides it is good order that matters the reason I ask it is simply because in the Church of Scotland it's fairly common as you know that the doctrine seems to be said at least the dogma seems to be said that it's the minister of the word and sacrament which means it that's the exclusive that in New Testament terms is in my judgment pardon me a totally unintelligible concept there is no such concept in the New Testament anywhere that I can find a minister of a sacrament there is a preacher who expounds the word and there are people who pass the elements around in the early church it was in fact deacons who would have passed the elements around as a rule because that was a table service they were deacons by definition and deacons passed the elements around the various members of the church

I wonder Professor Clare comment on the individual emphasis on this sacrament as distinct from the family emphasis which seems to be present in the other Old and New Testament sacraments well my response to that is again that I'm still thinking this one through Clive and I do not share the gut reaction felt by many evangelicals and Calvinists to the notion of children communicating that is not seem to me to involve any sacrifice of principle and it does in fact appear to me preferable to maintain covenant communicating that is preferable to abandoning infant baptism baptism and if the logic is pressed on me that we must be consistent you either baptise covenantally and then come to the Lord's table covenantally or you baptise individually and they come to supper individually if that's a choice

I prefer to say well let children who are covenant children who are members of Christian families come to the table with their parents as I say that is not a firmly held conviction but Professor John Murray I can't recall whether he has said this in writing or not but we discussed it at a time when his life and mine tended to overlap a fair bit and it was certainly his view that there was nothing that he could see inherently improbable about allowing youngster to come to the table with their parents and be at the table covenantally on the base of their parents' faith just as they came to baptism on the base of their parents' faith but I don't feel that I would want to myself open that question but if it is opened I would plead that people respond to it with moderation and restraint all right that's a very better stand where is that great the Lord Jesus instituted the Lord's supper on the night in which he was betrayed and it was in a large upper room with his disciples at a family meal and in Acts chapter 2 you read how the early Christians continued with one accord in the temple and breaking bread from house to house and I just wondered whether you saw any objection to Christian people meeting together in their respective houses and breaking bread and their privacy and intimacy about the domestic situation well at the very end in your lecture you said that you wanted to get away from all the embellishments if you like of the current situation in the churches today and I thought maybe

[69 : 20] I think the Lord's supper when it was instituted it was a fairly simple affair and I just want to say I think that I would say John that in exceptional situations I'd be quite happy for individual Christians to simply decide say in a prisoner of war camp or in some area where a very small minority say in Saudi Arabia where the church cannot meet it would seem to me perfectly legitimate then for the Christians assembled to decide themselves then to hold the Lord's supper but if those Christians are in fact part of an existing and regulated church it really seems to me best in terms of good order that the church itself should decide when and where to have the Lord's supper but the church could decide to have the sacraments anywhere provided it doesn't close the sacraments for example there is nothing wrong with house baptisms if they are publicly announced and the whole church is welcome to come to the sacrament in that home and some years ago we discussed in the presbytery having the sacrament of the Lord's supper in the eventide home and my view at that time was that it is respectfully alright for a congregation to announce that it will hold the sacrament in the eventide home and everybody is welcome but it seemed to me to be divisive and sectarians to say that this is for the eventide home only nobody else can come if the table is open it's publicly announced and anybody wants to come along to it so I prefer it myself to be arranged by the church but the church in my view can have it administered anywhere and by anybody whom the church itself appoints there will be a cup of tea served in the hall that we're normally in after the meeting and I hope that you won't be put off from waiting despite the lateness of the hour it seems to me that the main roads outside are really very good and perhaps better than they were earlier on in the day so do stay for a cup of tea if you can and the tapes will be on sale there as usual and I think that's all I need to say and I wondered

Clive if you would pray with us in conclusion please we'll stand to pray oh most gracious God our heavenly father we bless you for your word of truth and for all that it teaches us we ask our God that you would indeed instruct us and lead us in that truth by your Holy Spirit give us understanding give us wisdom we pray make us diligent students of your word and help us in so learning to put into practice what your word teaches us to do we ask your blessing to fall upon the word that we have heard this evening and we pray that you would bless each one of us gathered here and take us safely to our homes and cleanse us from sin for we ask in Jesus name Amen Amen Amen ■■■ corpo

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